EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Drug legalization

So far, the mayors of Washington, Baltimore and Minneapolis, plus several Congressmen have come out in the last couple of weeks saying the government's attitude towards drugs is a failure.

At issue is the possibility of legalizing drugs as a method of combatting the crime associated with illegal drug markets. The matter came into wide attention when Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke addressed the United States Conference of Mayors, where he proposed opening a discussion on the possibility of legislation.

As expected, this caused an uproar, with a bombastic Cong. Charles Rangel blasting the idea unequivocably. Learned scholars have proclaimed that it is impossible to envision accurately just what would be the result, if controlled substances were legalized.

They do say that the so-called soft drugs, such as marijuana, would be less dangerous than the legalization of such drugs as cocaine, heroin or morphine.

The lessons of Prohibition is cited often, as an incident of failure. Studies indicate, however, that hospitalizations for alcohol-related problems dipped drastically in the early 1920's, but surged dramatically when the Volstead Act was repealed in 1933.

The British had an experiment, which allowed physicians, until 1967, to prescribe heroin, and keep addicts on maintenance doses while attempting to get them off drug dependence. What happened was a tremendous upsurge in the number of addicts, causing doctors to turn away from prescribing the drugs.

There are arguments that will occupy volumes, and hours of debate — but the key thing is the airing of the issues. As Mayor Schmoke suggested, let's open talks, frank talks, on the problem, keeping all options open.

An ostrich-like posture of keeping one's head in the sand only helps to keep this country plunging deeper into the abyss of drug abuse. We agree with Mayor Schmoke — at least, we can talk about it.



Ruth Jenkins

SOB SISTER



A letter from Uncle Sam

. . . . Nothing is certain but death and taxes . . . .

Well, certainly the USA government must believe that. So, for the first time in its 200-year history, the federal government is contacting every household twice in one year. First, on the subject of taxes, and now on the subject of death.

In January, wage earners were sent the usual IRS pamphlets to make annual income tax reports. This month they will be mailed government brochures about the deadly disease of AIDS. Uncle Sam is reaching out to touch (and teach) everyone.

We can appreciate Uncle Sam's concern about this serious (and indiscriminate) threat to the nation's health and welfare. After all, an unhealthy population can't produce a healthy load of taxes.

Nevertheless, we are delighted to have Unk open a mail channel of communication to his citizenry kinfolk. Heretofore he has ignored our correspondence. Not been answering our letters, so we thought he had misplaced our address. Until of course, came income tax time.

We had got no response from him to our suggestions for improving the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness in this great country. No matter how brilliant the ideas.

Like about Philly's recent Primary Election. With bidders for U.S. President, U.S. senator, U.S. representative, State attorney-general, auditor general and treasurer; General Assembly senators and representatives, Supreme Court justice, Superior Court judge, Democratic National Committee delegates and alternates; Democratic State Committee and ward executive committee members.

From 123 choices, we wanted to select just 31. We were quite in the dark, figuratively and literally. Must have been only a 15-watt glow in the voting booth. Didn't compare even with light by the silvery moon.

Names at the bottom of the ballot were overcast in shadow. We couldn't find a space to write-in the name of Gary Hart. (We don't believe in holding a grudge, you see. And our aim is awfully poor when it comes to throwing stones.)

After this frustrating experience, we sent Uncle Sam a recommendation for making voter participation faster, fairer and finagle-proof. Especially with umpteen candidates in the running.

Why not (like with the Miss America pageantry) parade them across an arena stage on Election Day? The audience of voters could make selections either by a show of hands or by applause meter.

Discard two other 'Miss America' features. No panel of 'only human' judges. And no stupid questions to the competitors. Like "How would you make world antagonists straighten up and fly right in time for Christmas dinner?"

We wouldn't want a group of impressionable judges picking our WHO (White House Occupant). Being swayed by terrific tans, designer duds and a silver-toned, forktongued recital of campaign promises. Written by professional aides while the candidate was napping or star-gazing. Rehearsing for Oval Office service.

Well, we haven't received Uncle Sam's response yet to our Presidential Proposition. We suppose it's in the mail. By contacting us now, he is not really inviting a flood of correspondence. Because first he raised postal rates, a not-too-subtle deterrent.

But while we're revved up, we're gonna rip off one more plea to our federal foremen while the ripping is good:

Dear Sirs: Since the AIDS manuals are due out any day now, please make its info more simple, direct and understandable than that of the IRS pamphlets.

Not in the confusing complex commentary of typical governmentese. Nor in the earned but erroneous expressions like this obit of a Baltimore attorney:

"John Henry Doe died Friday while recovering from a brief illness and a period of hospitalization . . ."

Our government is investing $17 million in 115 million educational brochures about AIDS. We would hate to have this investment suffer a similar fate. While recovering, yet!

Seeking not finance or romance,
Make a man a friend, gals
Like you see, Uncle Sam and we
Just may become pen pals

Les Payne



Shattering the myth

Yogi Berra. Contemplate the man. Roll his name around. It has the right sound for these not so lazy days of spring.

Yogi played across my mind, I suppose, upon hearing Frank Robinson named manager of the Baltimore Orioles. Yogi's baseball managing days, along with hundreds of other white field generals, shatters that myth about how such men are chosen.

Competency and managing experience have been used to keep blacks out of sports-managing positions. Like dozens of other baseball managers, Yogi lacked both, as well as any discernible gift of leadership. He didn't even speak the language of his ball club, to wit, English.

Yogi always was, well, different. He is a pleasant though strangely silent man. No one walks the way Yogi walks. His waddle is that of the duck and, at the same time, the wildebeest.

No one looks quite like Yogi. Asked once about the combined seniority of himself and one of his pitchers, Berra said, "I don't know if we are the oldest batter, but we're certainly the ugliest." His cigar-butt face is that of a man who spent his career catching left hooks rather than baseballs.

The most magnificent thing about Yogi though is his manner of speaking. It is a kite battered by wind sheers. It transcends logical patterns of syntax. His simple sentences often have trick endings.

To a question about his feelings about Yankee pitcher Don Larsen, Yogi said, "I don't like him and I always will." On the decline of baseball attendance, Berra concluded, "If the people don't want to come out to the park, nobody's going to stop 'em." On losing a game: "We made too many wrong mistakes." Vintage Berra.

On the field, Yogi was different as well. "He isn't much to look at, and he looks like he's doing everything wrong, but he can hit," Mel Ott said, in 1946, of the man who was one of the game's best bad-pitch hitters. "He got a couple of hits off us on wild pitches." And after striking out on three bad pitches, Berra wondered aloud: "How can a pitcher that wild stay in the league?"

Always there is this deception about Berra. Even in his prime, he didn't look like an athlete; he was squat, knock-kneed, and awkward, with the speed of a terrapin and the hands of a longshoreman. Yet he was an extraordinarily successful hitter and catcher.

Berra hit consistently and with power especially in the clutch. Wherever Don Newcombe may be, he must still be spoiled by memories of the seventh game of the 1956 World Series when Berra waddled to the plate and ruined the Brooklyn Dodger hurler's best-ever season with two home runs.

Despite his skills as a player, Berra is my nomination for the metaphor for the baseball manager as incompetent. It is not quite clear how a manager of no particular skills could supervise a team while they are doubled over laughing at him.

Some sportswriters, however, point out that during earlier stints managing the Mets and Yankees, Berra's teams made it to the World Series. This, of course, does not prove that Berra is a competent manager, but rather that sportswriters are silly fellows and that other managers might fare better if they read the same comic books Berra reads.

Baseball managers clearly are overrated. "There are certain preeminent qualifications to managing a major-league baseball club," observed Howard Cosell. "You must be white and either a heavy drinker or a card player."

I originally set out in this space to call attention to that first qualification Cosell cited. I was going to go into the statistics and show how until this very hour managerial positions in this country, for the most part, are reserved for white males. Competency, a winning record, experience, compatibility, one's shoe size have nothing to do with who manages the Yankees or the Mets.

Yogi was going to be the hook to reel in the curious. But after taking a closer look at Yogi I am convinced that he is not the problem. He is a laughing stock and an incompetent sure enough, but he is not an appropriate exhibit to examine what is wrong with American sports at the managerial level.

Yogi Berra, who waddles now in some indescribable position with the Houston Astros, is a force unto himself, immune to comparisons, criticisms even.

It would be stretching it to call him smart, though he may well be baseball wise. He is thrifty, a collector of things, a sitter, for long, long hours, without apparent purpose. Asked about how he spent time preparing for a game, Berra said, "I usually take a two-hour nap, from 1 o'clock to 4."

In his 63rd year, Berra is no devotee, in his own life, of the work ethic. Even in his playing days he believed in doing one thing at a time. "How can you think and hit at the same time?" he raged when asked to try to anticipate the pitch.

"You give 100 percent in the first half the game, and if that isn't enough, in the second half you give what's left," just might be the kind of Berra advice we all need. "In baseball," Berra once said, "You don't know nothing."

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL



A salute to Zimbabwe

Justice-seeking and freedom - loving peoples throughout the world joined the people of Zimbabwe in celebrating the Eighth Anniversary of Independence of Zimbabwe on April 18, 1988.

President Robert Mugabe and the government of Zimbabwe have been successful in developing Zimbabwe into one of the strongest African nations that borders the racist apartheid regime of South Africa.

I had the unique opportunity to be in Zimbabwe on Independence Day as part of a leadership delegation from the United Church of Christ touring southern Africa.

As we travelled toward the international airport located in Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, we saw hundreds of persons coming into the city from the countryside to participate in the independence celebrations.

The streets were lined with the yellow, green, red, and black colors of Zimbabwe's national flag. There was a sense of joy in the air.

Key to the stability of any nation is the question of national unity. One of the benchmarks of Zimbabwe's progress toward unity was the recent unification of the two political parties that made up Zimbabwe's Patriotic Front: Zanu(PF) and PF-Zapu.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, who is the leader of Zanu(PF), has just named Dr. Joshua Nkomo, who is the leader of PF-Zapu, to be the Second Vice President of Zanu(PF).

In other words, from now on there will be one integrated political party that will serve the interests of the masses of the people of Zimbabwe, rather than a divisive, competitive two-party system which in the past caused more disunity than unity.

Mugabe and Nkomo should be congratulated for their unity and spirit and action. Other African and third world nations would do well to learn from Zimbabwe's success. Nkomo commented to a member of our delegation: "I put the freedom, unity, and development of Zimbabwe as the paramount concern."

We visited the leadership of the United Church of Christ of Zimbabwe. We were pleased to learn that there is a cooperative working relationship between the government and the church toward meeting and serving the needs of the people of Zimbabwe.

COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Ethel Payne

BEHIND THE SCENES



Mothers Day with a touch of Grenada

It was a perfect day for the occasion — plenty of sunshine, low humidity and the temperature a reasonable 70 degrees. For Dessima Williams and the board members of the Grenada Foundation it was a chance to celebrate mothers and others who have formed an extended family reaching from the state of Vermont to Grenada in the Caribbean Isles.

For those of you who may not remember, Miss Williams was former ambassador from Grenada to the United States. She was appointed by the late Maurice Bishop, the eloquent and controversial Prime Minister whose socialist philosophy aroused the enmity of the U.S. State Department and the CIA.

Bishop was friendly with Fidel Castro and when Cuban military was brought to the island to begin building an airstrip that would give greater access, U.S. intelligence went on alert.

On October 14, 1983, Prime Minister Bishop was ousted in a military coup. He was rescued two days later by loyalist troops, but one Oct. 19, he and some of his top aides were seized again and executed by the opposition.

Ironically, Bishop was scheduled to deliver the keynote address at the annual dinner of TransAfrica, the lobby for Africa and the Caribbean in Washington.

On Oct. 25, using the excuse that American students at a Grenada medical school were in danger, a U.S. force of 1,900 men and 300 units from Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Jamaica, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent launched the invasion of the island.

Dessima Williams was then a student at American University in Washington, combining her diplomatic responsibilities with her studies. In the swift pace of events she was declared persona non grata and subject to deportation.

Thus, began a long battle to defend her against the powers of the U.S. State Department, the Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Civil rights groups and several other activist organizations swung into action.

There were protest demonstrations and among the prominent persons who came to her support were Mrs. Jacquelyn Jackson speaking for her husband, Jesse; Mrs. Coretta Scott King and former Congressman Shirley Chisholm. Eventually, Williams was cleared and restored to her student status, American troops left the island in June of 1985, but the question, "Was this trip necessary?" remained cloudy.

Today, nearly three years later, calm has returned to the island, but the economy is shaky. There is a serious "brain drain" and a flight of young people. The once flourishing tourism industry that brought people by the thousands to this tranquil paradise is slowly revitalizing.

The Grenada Foundation established three years ago by Williams and fellow Grenadians in the United States is a non-profit association working for true independence and the restoration of national pride. It beckons scholars and professionals to return to their native land to assist in re-building the nation.

But on Mother's Day, the mood at the spacious Washington apartment was upbeat with no political overtones, but an abundance of warmth. Cousins, aunts and uncles, including surrogates and a coterie of delightful small children filled the rooms. The youngest was three weeks old.

There were elders in their 70's. There was a blend of nationalities, Koreans, Nigerians, Liberians and of course Grenadians and home grown black and white Americans, all friends of Dessima Williams.

The guests of honor were Mrs. Neitha Williams, mother of Dessima, and Mrs. Blanche Grant "Aunt Blanche" of Brooklyn, New York, a board member of the Grenada Foundation. Two of her sisters were present, Yvonne Williams and Carol Ahanebu, both of Washington, assisted in the hostessing.

Mrs. Williams, who lives in St. Georges, where she owns a basket market and operates a guest house, is on a month's tour, visiting here and then two other daughters in London and Athens, Greece. Pat and Elizabeth French live in Bethesda, Maryland. He is a retired World Bank official.

Both are dedicated to Third World interests and remain active in anti-apartheid causes despite their advanced years. Dessima refers to them as her "grandparents" who supported her in her fight to clear her name. They are part of the extended interracial family behind her.

As the tantalizing aroma of Grenadaian cuisine wafted from the kitchen, a radiant Dessima flitted among her guests, greeting arrivals with hugs and kisses. The menu included baked swordfish and fried salmon, rice and peas, something called "yard fowl," (chicken to you); a bread made from manioc, flour which is extracted from the cassava root and is a staple in many African countries as well as the West Indies.

There was rice and peas, another staple; plenty of luscious fruit and an array of desserts that said in effect, "to hell with calories!"

When everyone had eaten their full, Dessima clapped her hands for attention. It was time to praise mothers and others and for a few speeches. As she talked about the virtues of the honorees, she nearly did a back flip over the sofa to retrieve the hidden, gaily wrapped gifts to present.

Mother Williams beamed and shyly thanked everyone. Then Aunt Blanche took the floor to make a soul-stirring speech on God and country. She and her husband, both naturalized American citizens, are returning to their roots to promote the cause for which they have devoted their lives to, the stabilization of Grenada.

When Aunt Blanche speaks, it is in the tone of a devout church member testifying to her faith and using her hands with graceful gestures to accent the message.

As the invitation read, "Her leaving the U.S. is a major loss to our work here but a big boost to activities inside Grenada."

And what is Dessima doing with her life now after the political storm? Well, she is completing her doctoral dissertation at American University and will soon get her degree in international relations.

Walter E. Williams

MINORITY VIEWPOINT



Congressional immorality and special favors

Congressmen soar above the heights of political hypocrisy whenever they proclaim the virtues of rule of law and equality. Their real mission in Washington is to confiscate the property of one American for the benefit of another. As an adjunct to this calling, they're in business to give one American a special favor that's denied to others.

"Okay," you say, "Williams, I've had it. We send honorable men to Congress; it says so on their stationery. Either you stop maligning our congressmen, or prove they are not honorable."

How's this? According to the April 24 **Dallas Morning News**, Mrs. Geraldine Ballard, a widow, lives in a $600,000 house in Fort Worth. The IRS estimates her estate taxes to be $4 million but not to worry.

House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, has introduced the following legislation:

"For the purposes of section 2656 (b) (8) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, an individual who receives an interest in a charitable remainder trust shall be deemed the only non - charitable beneficiary of such a trust passed to the individual under the will of a decedent who resided in Tarrant County, Texas, and died on October 28, 1983, at the age of 75, with a gross estate not exceeding 12.5 million and the individual is the decedent's surviving spouse."

Who can understand this mumbo-jumbo, but if this bill is enacted by Congress, it means Mrs. Ballard won't owe the IRS $4 million. If this is not law by privileges (private law), you tell me what is.

Knowing Jim Wright's reasoning powers he might argue it is equality before the law because everybody who lives in Tarrant County, whose benefactor died Oct. 28, 1983, at the age of 75, is eligible for this tax forgiveness.

When the Tax Reform Act of 1986 was written, Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, D.-Ill., proclaimed it as "a bill that reaches deep into our national sense of justice . . . and gives us back a trust in government that has slipped away in the maze of tax preferences for the rich and powerful."

While Rostenkowski was blindsiding us with that hogwash, his colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee were earnestly working away at crafting at least 605 other special privilege exemptions, such as Wright has crafted for Mrs. Ballard.

Congressional activity like this is nothing less than dishonesty, charlatanry, and quackery and ought to be condemned by all. It's offensive to the public trust. But what are decent people to do?

The moral course of action is for us to demand an end to all congressional privilege - granting. But America is in short supply of this kind of courage.

Whenever we see government privilege - granting, we succumb to the temptation of not calling for its end; instead we ask our legislators to, "Grant me a special privilege too." That being the case, maybe we should write our congressman demanding the same privilege received by Mrs. Ballard.

Manning Marable

ALONG THE COLOR LINE



Stop Jesse Movement

Part II

Dukakis's victory in the New York primary made the Massachusetts governor the acknowledged frontrunner for the presidential nomination. He is now faced with three difficult tasks. First, he must continue winning the upcoming primaries over Jackson, give credibility to the notion that his nomination is all but "inevitable."

Second, Dukakis cannot afford to alienate Jesse's core constituency — nearly all black Americans, most Hispanics, and millions of white liberal and working class voters.

If Dukakis is the nominee, he will require massive black support to defeat Bush in the general election. This is the reason Dukakis distanced himself from Gore's clumsy attacks on Jackson during the New York primary.

And third, Dukakis must select a vice presidential candidate who will help to create an electoral majority in November. Jackson's chief supporters, including campaign chairperson Willie Brown and director Gerry Austin, have already claimed that Jesse merits serious consideration as a vice presidential choice.

Jackson's victories over Dukakis in Vermont, Delaware, and Michigan, plus his continued ability to carry substantial numbers of white voters in other states illustrates that the black challenger could actually help the party's ticket.

But the mainstream, white leaders of the Democratic Party remain convinced that Jackson is a major liability. "Race" is only partial explanation for the "Stop Jackson" effort. Political ideology is also a crucial factor which motivates the enemies of the Rainbow Coalition.

Jackson's message is well to the left of all the other candidates, and he challenges some fundamental assumptions within the political economy of American capitalism and U.S. foreign policy. This partially explains the overwhelming rejection of Jackson by many traditionally liberal constituencies.

The New York primary also brought into focus, once again, the 20-year old division between two liberal Democratic constituencies — blacks and jews — over a whole range of public policy issues. The immediate issue under debate was Jackson's record of "insensitivity" to Jewish concerns.

His regrettable "Hymietown" slur, his former relationship with black nationalist leader Louis Farrakhan, and endorsement of Palestinian self - determination once more made headlines. But in truth, Jackson's candidacy was largely a scapegoat for other concerns.

Some anti-Jackson leaders in the Jewish community made several invalid claims to obscure their own agenda. First, they insisted that Jews did not engage in "bloc voting," and that Jackson's anti-Semitic record was exclusively responsible for the overwhelming Jewish endorsement of Dukakis.

But recent electoral data contradicts the first claim. Back in the 1980 Democratic primaries, New York Jewish voters supported Senator Edward Kennedy over incumbent President Jimmy Carter by a four to one margin.

Four years later, the state's Jewish electorate gave Walter Mondale more than two-thirds of the vote, compared with 27 percent for Gary Hart and barely 5 percent for Jackson.

"Bloc voting" exists whenever two-thirds or more within a specific constituency consistently votes in a particular way.

By this criteria, it's obvious that both Jews and black Americans generally have voted as blocs; to suggest otherwise denies political reality.

Dr. Manning Marable is Chairperson of the Black Studies Department, Ohio State University.

F. Gregory Newton



AIDS, drugs, genocide

[Part I]

"Within only seven years time — just since 1981 — AIDS has burst out of obscurity to threaten every nation with crippling social and economic tragedy." This statement was published in a nationally known theological magazine.

If this statement is true, then it begs the question: What national phenomena could produce such a sudden and all - encompassing epidemic?

Perhaps that magazine article suggested the answer when it quoted further: "AIDS seems to have an almost 100 percent fatality rate after serious symptoms develop."

Indeed, this statement suggests that the AIDS epidemic was too completely swift, too completely wide in its spread, and too completely deadly in its effect to be simply a natural reaction in man's biology to man's sexual perversions.

It thus appears more likely to be a deliberate man-made and man-inspired phenomena. The effect of this possible man-made madness could be the result of a well-calculated plan to test a germ or a chemical's ability to kill people generally, and which has gone to a successful fruition;

Or, it could be the result of a conspiracy to test that germ or chemical's ability to kill a specific ethnic or racial group of people, but which instead has gone awry (failed) — a tragic man-inspired, but insidious accident.

Indeed, the history of man's search for the means to destroy his fellow-man without destroying himself is well documented. In the case of AIDS and drugs and germ warfare, it is the United States which stands as a major culprit, according to documents in the Library of Congress.

It is she who initiated the country's drug culture — for the purpose of determining what drugs would yield what effects on what humans. It was the United States who, in 1968, planted lethal germs in the subway system of New York City, in order to study their effects on human populations. Thus, its own citizens are not too important to be used as guinea pigs.

It was the government, the record shows, that first introduced drugs to the college campus, creating a drug culture which now runs rampant throughout the culture itself.

As chance would have it, it was the recent coup in Panama, by an internationally known drug dealer, General Manuel Antonio Noriego, that exposed the American government's involvement in the importation of drugs to the United States. It was this coup that exposed the fact that the U.S. Government has financed and backed this dictator and drug runner since the Ford Administration.

It is Noriega who was exposed as the major exporter of cocaine and other drugs from Central America, making him the United State's "Central American Connection."

(To Be Continued)